BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

Graham, L., & Fleming, S. (2016). Developing a Coaching Philosophy: Exploring the Experiences of Novice Sport Coaching Students. *Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching*, 1 (1), 60-79.

Graham, L., & Fleming, S. (2014) Developing a Coaching Philosophy: Exploring the Experiences of Novice Sport Coaching Students. *Journal of Athlete Centered Coaching* 1 (2):27-49.

Abstract

Sport coaches play an essential role in developing positive and engaging sport climates and coach educators have identified that a strong coaching philosophy is a central factor in the provision of these positive experiences. A coach's philosophy is composed of their values and beliefs and is influenced by their life experiences and background. This study explored the coaching philosophies of first year sport coaching degree students in order to establish: their understanding of the concept of philosophy, the primary values and beliefs expressed, and the origins of these beliefs. The written coaching philosophy statements of 77 sport students, submitted during their first trimester were examined. Inductive content analysis generated several key areas to which students tended to refer: Defining Success, Encouraging Fun, Building Character, and Origin of Beliefs. Consistent with previous research on novice coaches, it was noted that participants appeared to struggle to articulate the precise nature of their philosophy and in particular, how it would translate into action. Developing coach education systems which encourage deep reflection and critical analysis of coaching philosophies is imperative for inclusive and effective sport provision.

Introduction

Sport coaching has been the focus of increasing academic interest (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2008), particularly in the areas of coach behaviour and its impact on athletes, development of knowledge and expertise, mentoring, experiential learning, and reflection (Gilbert and Trudel, 2004). Yet paradoxically, despite the fundamental relationship that exists between coach behaviour and coaching philosophies (Jenkins, 2010), the latter have been relatively unexplored. This lack of attention to the development and articulation of coaching philosophies is particularly surprising given the pervasiveness of personal reflective exercises and resources in coach education courses; activities intended to develop precisely these philosophies. Indeed, most of the work purporting to explore philosophies originates from anecdotal accounts, often drawn from media interviews or the autobiographies of high performance coaches (Jenkins, 2010).

This study presents an analysis of the coaching philosophies of novice sport coaches studying for a sport coaching degree at a university in the United Kingdom (U.K.). Using written statements submitted by students near the beginning of their course, the paper seeks to explore both the content and the perceived origins of their coaching approach. The results focus primarily on elements relating to the principal purpose for coaching and to the relative influences of previous sport experience, significant others, and self-reflection. This paper is underpinned by the necessity to develop deeper understanding of coaches' philosophies, with the ultimate aim of

facilitating the development of more effective athlete-centred coaching through improved coach education.

Background and context

The concept of a coaching philosophy has been defined most frequently as being linked to the importance of values (Cross and Lyle, 1999). A particular coach's philosophy can therefore be considered as comprising their beliefs regarding the role, purpose, and approach to the coaching act. Lyle (2002) suggests that a coach's set of values provides context for behaviour and a conceptual framework through which experiences are evaluated and ranked. He proposes that these personal values are more deeply embedded than beliefs and remain relatively stable over time. In his work on the constructs of beliefs, values, and principles, Rokeach (1973) describes a useful framework for analysis. He categorises values as "prescriptive or proscriptive" beliefs, which identify one mode of conduct (instrumental value) or resultant end-state (terminal value) as being preferable to others. From Rokeach's study on American societal values, examples of instrumental values included ambitious, courageous, honest, and responsible, while terminal values included such concepts as freedom, happiness, and self-respect. Applying this to a coaching context then, it could be assumed that elements such as being reliable, kind, organised, or strict could be considered to be instrumental values, while end-state, or terminal values could include for example equality, respect or self-determination. Coaching practice is therefore assumed to be a reflection of the core values held by each individual coach, which can be expressed in a set of guiding principles, or a coaching philosophy. This interpretation however is less

simplistic in practice for a number of reasons. While coaches may state a certain set of core values, their behaviour may not always match this. Firstly, a lack of effective self-reflection may result in the coach being unaware of any incongruence between their alleged values and their actual behaviour. Alternatively, the coach may deliberately misrepresent their value system, in order to either present a more socially desirable front, or to conform to specific organisational value systems.

Identifying one's coaching philosophy is a complex task and can be easily confused with possessing a philosophy about a certain sport, which in reality merely amounts to technical/tactical knowledge or models. Rather than a more holistic set of values regarding practice in general, technical/tactical models are likely to be a set of beliefs about the ways to approach preparation, game strategies, or desirable performer qualities. In order to develop an awareness and reach a genuine understanding of one's philosophy, (Lyle, 2002) suggests that in-depth self-reflection and potentially the use of critical incidents from practice are crucial.

Although identifying a distinctive coaching philosophy is by no means a simple task, it should not be avoided. Examining one's coaching philosophy helps to ensure practice is consistent rather than reactive, and also that power in the athlete-coach relationship is not misused. The development of an appropriate philosophy has been touted as being key to successful coaching and positive sport experiences by a number of authors (Martens, 2004; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000), and Cassidy, Jones and Potrac (2008) state that being able to articulate a philosophy is a prerequisite to good practice as a coach. Coaches can be highly influential socialising agents,

particularly for young athletes, and an appropriate philosophy plays a role in helping participants to develop life skills. (Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012)

As discussed however, problems may arise when claimed philosophies are actually actioned, or not as is more likely. Coaches will often feel at ease writing descriptions of their values and approach but find it difficult to articulate how these aims are actually implemented (McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000). The constraints and contextual pressures of real-world coaching are often ignored when describing philosophies and, in practice, the coach is likely to revert to comfortable and familiar territory, rather than critical self-awareness. This is epitomised by Stewart (1993) where coaches are described as “talking” rather than walking” their philosophy. For a philosophy to be functional then, it needs to take account the constraints of real-life practice and be specific enough to influence behaviour. This requires an in-depth engagement with the process, rather than the production of a list of meaningless, generic statements.

The literature exploring philosophy explicitly has been somewhat divided on coaches’ abilities to articulate their philosophy. In their series of studies designed to examine the means by which high school coaches teach life skills and build character in their players, Collins *et al*. (2009) uncovered an unanticipated volume of data on the importance of the coaches’ philosophical beliefs. The ability of these coaches to discuss their philosophies at length could be attributed to their level of expertise, as they were considered to be highly experienced and successful in their fields. In contrast, Nash, Sproule and Horton (2008) examined the philosophies and beliefs of sport coaches across a range of experience from novice level to expert. One of their findings was that

early-career coaches tended to focus on more practical aspects such as safety and discipline predominately and seemed to struggle to define the enormity of the coaching role. They also tended to attribute their approach and values to personal experience gained as athletes or to rely on their own previous coaches' philosophies. The means by which coaches learn their craft has been the subject of considerable attention and has resulted in a body of work too broad to explore in any great depth here. The consensus from this work however is that experience and observation of peers remain the primary sources of knowledge for coaches (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003). Nash *et al.* also suggest that novice coaches tend to focus on sport-specific skills and content, rather than more general values. This is reminiscent of Lyle's assertion that, when asked to discuss their philosophy, many coaches will tend to confuse a particular and sport specific approach to training and match-play with a deeper, more value-based analysis of their principles.

The suggestion that less experienced coaches found the articulation of a philosophy difficult was challenged however by Collins *et al*. (2011), who concluded that the pre-service coaches in their study appeared to have reasonably clear ideas of the principles guiding their coaching approach. The authors concluded that despite, their lack of coach education or experience, the participants already held strong beliefs regarding the purpose and process of coaching. They did feel however that, while the coaches could express their philosophy, they were less sure of the process of implementation. This sentiment is echoed in McCallister's *et al*. (2000) work with youth baseball and softball coaches, who also seemed to demonstrate difficulties in expressing the means by which they actually implemented their philosophies and in fact

had often produced accounts of behaviour which was directly contradictory to their supposed beliefs. For example, while the coaches stressed that they did not emphasise the importance of winning, team meetings were reportedly only held after a loss. While the coaches suggested this was for the purpose of reassuring participants, one coach was quoted as saying, “they need to know what they did wrong so they won’t make the same mistake again” (p41).

With regards to the actual content of coach philosophies, the interplay between coaching objectives (e.g. fun versus success) and the beliefs which underlie the desire to achieve these objectives are a common focus (Collins *et al*., 2009). Despite some suggestion that an emphasis on winning and competitive success is prevalent (and potentially damaging in youth sport) (Marten, 2004), empirical evidence from the limited studies available implies the issue is rather more complex. Personal, social, and emotional development of players has been highlighted by coaches as a prime objective, as opposed to winning games and competitions (Bennie and O'Connor, 2010; Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012; Collins et al., 2009). For example, the high school coaches in Collins *et al*. (2009) study emphasised the importance of player development; socially, psychologically, and academically, rather than just physically, and the development of key life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and a good work ethic, off and on the field were considered to be a core element in their philosophies. Wilcox and Trudel (1998) pose an interesting conclusion in their investigation of the philosophy of a youth ice hockey coach, suggesting that their participant was able to balance the achievement of both winning games, and focusing on the development of social and emotional skills. These examples could of course be reminiscent of Lyle

(2002)'s assertion that coaches may misrepresent their values in favour of those deemed more socially acceptable. Nonetheless, it would appear that the construction of beliefs and values in coaching, particularly around the issue of competition versus fun, may be more complex than previously thought.

Procedures

This study is part of a wider research project following the development of student coaches' philosophies in Higher Education. Students on a sport coaching degree at a U.K. university submitted written coaching philosophies as part of a first year, first trimester coaching practice module. Following ethical approval from the first author's institution, the students were informed of the research focus and purpose during a key lecture. Interested parties were given an information sheet with further details and a consent form, which would allow their assessments to be accessed by the researcher after the conclusion of the module. It was stressed both in person and on the participant information sheets that the analysis would in no way influence their performance in the module, nor any future module within their programme, that participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any point in the study. 77 students subsequently granted permission for their statements to be used.

The written statements contained descriptions of how the students viewed their current approach to coaching; the underpinning values, primary influences, and an attempted concretisation of their perception of their current philosophy. Using an inductive, qualitative approach, the documents were read and reread to enable

familiarisation with the data, and recurring themes and sub-themes were established and coded using NVivo software (Patton, 2002).

While it is acknowledged that students in the study described in this paper may have been subject to either social desirability bias or an inadequate level of reflection, the results are viewed nonetheless as a useful starting point for the exploration of the development of coaching philosophies. Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the written statements generated a large volume of data and while there were a number of emergent themes, this paper considers the interplay between coaching objectives, sub-themed as defining success, building character, and encouraging fun, and the perceived origin of these beliefs.

Purpose of coaching

Previous literature (Bennie and O'Connor, 2010; Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2012; Collins et al., 2009; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000) has challenged the notion that coaches are predominantly concerned with winning. Rather, it has been suggested that the coach's focus is more complex and often depends upon the context. These findings were replicated within the novice coaches' statements. While students considered encouraging achievement to be a main focus of their philosophy and purpose for coaching, most used terms such as "fulfilling potential" or "being challenged", indicating a reference to personal development, rather than winning. There were still a number of

students however who were more forceful in their language in referring directly to competitive success.

Defining success

> "The main idea of sport is based on pushing the limits and being better than ever before. For me athletes should be prepared and are expected to make sacrifices for their team or sport, athletes should strive to be the best that they can be in and outside their sport, and finally participants should strive forward in their pursuits and except [sic] no limits in sport."

This is a particularly provocative quotation as it seems to replicate almost verbatim the language describing the norms of the sport ethic; the expectation that athletes should push beyond normative boundaries to achieve an athletic identity. Over-conformity to the sport ethic was proposed by Hughes and Coakley (1991) as an explanation for deviant behaviour e.g. use of performance enhancing drugs, eating disorders, in athletes. The sport ethic encapsulates four key elements thought to be essential in the achievement of the status of "true" athlete: being an athlete involves making sacrifices for The Game, being an athlete involves striving for distinction, being an athlete involves accepting risk and playing through pain, and being an athlete involves refusing to accept limits in the pursuit of possibility. These norms are thought to become internalised by fans, journalists, coaches, and sponsors, becoming an accepted and indeed expected standard of behaviour for athletes. It is clear from the excerpt that this discourse has been incorporated into the philosophy of this particular novice coach,

which is perhaps a little troubling, considering the potential implications. While these elements may appear valid and necessary tenets for athletic success, some participants will “over-conform”, pushing them to; play through pain to the point of permanent damage, over-train, engage in disordered eating or performance enhancing drugs, or perhaps participate in cheating, all in the effort to fulfil what they perceive to be the requirements for athletic identity. As discussed previously, a coach can have a considerable influence upon their participants and the potential for transmission of harmful discourse is high. Rynne and Mallett (2014) utilise the analogy of “bashing a bag of eggs against a wall”, where only a few will eventually remain intact, to represent the process of elite sport development and the inclination to opt for short-term gains, which could potentially risk the future career of their athlete (and indeed, their own).

The tendency for sport to reproduce discourse emphasising high performance, oppressive coach-athlete relationships, and elitism (Fernández-Balboa and Muros, 2006; Light and Evans, 2011; Sparkes, Partington and Brown, 2007) was not the most dominant theme emerging from the coach philosophies but there were certainly several references to the ideologies of achievement and autocratic practice.

> “Beginners in the sport want to have fun and enjoy themselves, however when you progress in your sport it is not only about having fun but also about winning and in order to win you must work hard. “

> “I think it is important for players to be of a competitive nature and to strive and push themselves to the best of their capabilities, no matter what.”

The emphasis on competitive success in modern sport is now so deeply ingrained it is little wonder the novice coaches should demonstrate at least some trace of the desire to win within their philosophies. Watson and White (2007) highlight the prevalence of the "win at all costs" message in sport media and advertising, citing examples such as; "you don't win silver, you lose gold", "you are nothing until you are number one", and second place is the first loser" (p64). The persuasive power of this discourse contributes towards the current, dominant, western sport culture; one which Watson and White (2007) propose is characterised by a willingness to; mistreat opponents through acts of violence and aggression, use performance enhancing drugs, overtraining, or disordered eating, and engage in the practice of deceiving officials or manipulating rules for personal or team gain. Although student coaches will be exposed to many conflicting discourses concerning the values inherent in sport, for example from education, peers, and organisations, overcoming the omnipotence of the "win at all costs" discourse would seem to be a major challenge for coach education.

Other novices however conceded that, while winning may be important, they were less concerned with the outcome of matches or games and more interested in their athletes' personal development.

> "I consider the results or outcome of a tournament or competition to be less important than increasing the athletes [sic] knowledge of the sport and developing on their performance. Educating the athletes is extremely more significant than the results of a match. I need to focus on how the athletes

perform the skill and making sure they have a clear understanding of exactly how to execute it”

“I see success in many ways winning a league, not getting relegated, reaching a cup final. My ultimate goal is getting the best out of my team. All I ask is my team play to their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses. This will include both training sessions and competitive matches. Success is also measured by respecting rules from the manager, coach and referee. If we lose a game but have respected the rules, the other team, and played the style I want them to play as a team. If we have set out a goal for a certain game and we achieve this, or I ask for them to improve on certain aspects which we were poor from the previous game, I consider these all successes. If we win the game then that's an added bonus.”

The reluctance to emphasise competitive success as a component of these philosophies may be a genuine reflection of the coaches’ value systems, but it is also possible that these statements embody the rhetoric described by Lyle (2002), suggesting that they become merely a list of ideological statements, which would not be enacted in practice. This could be due to an inability to reflect in enough depth to ensure there is no incongruence between “talking” and “walking” the philosophy (Stewart, 1993), or a desire to deliberately misrepresent their approach to: present a more socially desirable front, to fulfil what they believe to be the expectations of the module marker, or to conform with a specific organisation’s set of values. Several of the quotes

above also demonstrate incongruences in the coaches' philosophies, as they perceived it, similar to those described by McCallister, Blinde and Weiss (2000). For example, the last quotation emphasises a strong player development theme but, when giving examples of success, mentions winning a league or avoiding relegation; both very outcome focused objectives.

Building character

The assertion by Collins *et al*. (2009) that their high school football coaches were more concerned with the social, psychological, and academic development of players than competitive success appears to be substantiated by novice coaches in this study. At this early stage in their development however, it is possible that they have not yet considered the actual implementation in practice of this form of development (Collins *et al*., 2011; McCallister, Blinde and Weiss, 2000) or indeed whether the constraints of real world will allow it (Stewart, 1993).

> "As a coach, I want the best for my athletes. I feel that coaching is as much to do with building character and developing life skills, as winning. Through coaching I aim to inspire my athletes to be the best they can be not only in their chosen sport but life in general. I believe that through participation in sport you learn how to socialise with your peers and adults, what the qualities of a good leader are and develop the qualities required for good decision

making and accepting responsibility, which are all important parts of an adults' day to day life."

"This means that our role as the coach is to teach and educate through sport. We must help our athletes not only develop the skills and techniques they need to perform at the highest level their ability allows. We must also coach them in becoming better people"

The assertion that sport participation can produce positive developmental effects in young people is common in literature but aspects of the coach's role in facilitating these life skills has been less well explored (Collins *et al*., 2009). Gould *et al*. (2007) clarify this by positing that, while much research has examined, for example, the effect of coaches' relationship skills upon psychosocial development and the teaching of mental skills to young athletes, the elements which are less clear are whether these life skills transfer beyond sport and how these skills were actually taught. Indeed, several authors have attempted to explore the mechanisms by which coaches transmit these skills but found that, while the coaches are able to identify certain values as being important, they are less certain or of the teaching strategies through which this is achieved. In their series of papers examining this area, Collins *et al.* suggest that the development of life skills in participants cannot be separated from routine coaching, that strong coach-athlete relationships and an understanding of the social context were essential in the process, and that an emphasis on personal development within coaching philosophies was critical.

The use of sport as a means of developing desired character traits has been a common theme throughout history but perhaps most notably in the Muscular Christianity movement of Victorian Britain. The term, which was first used in 1850 to describe the traits portrayed in the novels of Kingsley and Hughes, refers to the connection between godliness and physical fitness (Watson, 2007). Sport was advocated as a means of developing both the physical and mental strength necessary in particular to prepare boys and men for a life advancing British imperialism across the continent. The notion that sport can develop characteristics such as honour, discipline, and restraint is a belief still held strongly by many, often without due criticality or understanding of mechanism.

Encouraging fun

Perhaps predictably, the concept of "fun" was highlighted frequently by the student coaches but some were clearer on the execution or importance of this than others.

> "As a coach I feel that it is my job to enforce the element of fun into my lessons and decide how much fun should happen throughout my class, whether it is younger children at a beginning level or an athlete at an elite level training for the Olympics."

This is a thought-provoking quotation as, while the meaning may have been obfuscated by the writing style, the use of the words "enforce", and "decide" would appear to demonstrate a strong degree of coach control, despite apparently discussing the concept of fun.

> “Sport was initially created as a way to have fun, so I believe it should stay like this. Sport participation and coaching should be treated as a gift and talent that you should appreciate and work at because it is almost your responsibility, if you have a gift it is for a reason. If you do not enjoy a sport then you do not have the motivation to be successful and be victorious or have a competitive edge, however if you love it and have fun whilst playing it you will most certainly be more motivated to do better in it.”

Similarly, while this second quotation employs quite emotive language to stress the importance of retaining the element of fun, it is still strongly tied to the notion of competitive success. There are also underlying fatalistic tones; the use of the terms, “gift”, “talent”, “responsibility”, and “it is for a reason” imply an almost spiritual bent to sport participation i.e. that the athlete has been bestowed with a natural talent by a higher power and that not acting upon this talent would be in some way immoral. The link between sport and spirituality has, of course, been discussed briefly in relation to the influence of Muscular Christianity.

> “By making my coaching session more fun orientated than serious skill development I believe that I fulfil Martens philosophy "Athletes First, Winning Second" I believe that this is my coaching philosophy because I would rather my athletes had fun when training in their sport, than be disciplined in training. For most people sport is a hobby, something that they do out of their

own free time and should therefore be an enjoyable experience. Not one that they go home with a negative outlook on. Something that they want to do out of their own motivation rather than the feeling that they need to come back."

"Despite my beliefs that the sessions should be fun, I admit, from my own experiences, you can enjoy a sport more through playing well and being reasonably good at something. For example, if you are playing a game and are unable to make many shots it can be demoralising a little for some people, including myself. I appreciate though that this statement is biased based on my beliefs as there are those who happily play games even if they are not that great at curling and don't make any shots; they enjoy the game and enjoy the social part of curling"

In a similar vein to the findings of McCallister, Blinde and Weiss (2000), it is interesting to note that, while fun was deemed to be an important element within sessions, it was believed by some coaches that this was often linked to winning, i.e. that in order for children to enjoy their sport, they would need to experience some degree of competitive success.

The term "fun" is one which is frequently utilised by coaches, often without real understanding of why, or what actually constitutes fun. Côté *et al*. (2007) provide a useful framework of coaching contexts in which to evaluate coaching excellence. During the sampling years (~6-12 years of age) and the recreational years (13+), coaches would be classed as participation, whereas during the

specialising years (13-15) and the investment years (16+) the emphasis is predominantly on performance. Côté *et al*. (2007) suggest that a different set of competencies is necessary for these two forms of coaching and highlight the importance of fun at both the sampling and recreational stages. Within these contexts, the coach ought to encourage activities which emphasise experimentation, internal satisfaction, playfulness, and opportunities to socialise. There may be some informal competition at the recreational stage but outcome-based competitive environments should be avoided within these typologies. The emphasis on fun emerging from the coaches' statements in this study suggests that the majority have, at this point, gained experience primarily within the sampling and recreational years. This would seem logical, given their relatively novice status and it would be interesting to observe their career over some time to explore whether they remain within this remit or move to a more performance-based environment. In this case, Wilcox and Trudel (1998) would suggest that the coaches' focus would therefore shift to adapt to the new context and that winning and player development should not be seen as opposites but rather as elements in a continuum. Côté *et al.* (2007) do not suggest that this is a natural progression however, proposing instead that the competences for excellence at each stage are distinct.

Origins and development of philosophy

The development of coaching knowledge has been a key theme in the literature but this has been less explicitly discussed in terms of coaches' philosophies. The coaches in

this study tended to attribute their philosophical approach to three primary sources: personal experience in sport, significant others, and reflection.

Personal experience

Most students noted that the primary motivators for them as coaches were the positive experiences they encountered through sport participation during their youth.

> "I have had great times playing sport and think that if I can contribute to having the same amount of enjoyment and fun as I have had whilst participating in sport then I can be very content with myself."

> "From being a participant and having a great love of my sport and as a coach I have a drive to provide others with my passion for sport through providing competitive games and adapting situations to provide participants with the feelings of success and wining [sic] which may result in them participating in the sport for life."

The clear accumulation of sport experience prior to engaging with the coaching degree further substantiates the claims of Cushion, Armour and Jones (2003) that coaches arrive with already deeply embedded values, or a sport habitus, which may then blunt attempts to integrate unfamiliar practices. The attraction sport holds for the novice coaches could also be linked to the assertion by Lyle (2002) that participants are drawn

to continue in sport as it matches their value system. One individual seemed to be drawn to sport initially as an escape from traumatic experiences as a young person and reflects upon the potential for sport to be personally empowering and positive.

> "Being bullied at school can destroy your confidence, this happened to me during primary and early secondary. The way I found best to deal with this was athletics, through the help and encouragement of coaches in my local athletics club I was able to build confidence not only in sport but in life. By learning how to run for long distances I was able to put the aggression the confusion and the pain into my running helping me to get rid of these feelings. It taught me patience, discipline and control three qualities I take into my coaching style. I went through a lot and it is because of this I want to help anyone I can, not just the people who are struggling but the people who are enthusiastic. These enthusiastic people aren't always the most talented but their enthusiasm and willingness to learn and get better inspires me to get better as a coach and as a person."

The ability of this participant to articulate and exemplify the origins of their philosophy is laudable and produces quite useful data as it provides a relatively clear picture the underlying values which guide their coaching philosophy. The statement suggests an ability to empathise with those who are not necessarily high performance athletes and to develop self-esteem and confidence in those who perhaps who have not already developed a traditional sport habitus (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003).

Significant others

The role of significant others reoccurs frequently in the literature, whether discussed as socialising agents during childhood, as formal or informal mentors (Bloom *et al*., 1998) or within communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The primacy of this form of learning was replicated in the coaches' understanding of the shaping of their philosophies. Again, many of the key figures mentioned as being influential in the development of the novice coaches were positive role models, largely parents or Physical Education teachers. Several students however did cite the influence of negative experiences through coaches who they believe did not have an approach they themselves would care to emulate. In fact, these students suggest that they will always remember actions these coaches had taken and would use that information to do the opposite.

> "During my time as an athlete myself, a number of personal experiences which I have had, are possibly the reason why I coach the way I do today. One stand out bad experience was during a training session at my athletic club. On this day, I wasn't performing to my best level and the coach picked up on this. Instead of being taken to one side and helping me figure out my flaws within the skill, I was made to stand in front of the class and show everyone what I was doing and how I was doing it wrong. By being made a bad example it made others laugh which left me feeling demoralised and

underachieving. I have never been negative towards any of my pupils as I would never wish for them to leave a session feeling as put down as I did."

This particular participant demonstrates a degree of reflection as, rather than blindly replicate the practices of what was clearly a fairly insensitive coach, they were able to process their emotional response and develop their own interpretation of the experience. The majority of participants however emphasised the importance of positive role models during their developmental years.

"I always ask myself why I got into sport. I believe I got into it due to the incredible role models I had growing up which include my P.E. teacher, my parents and sports idols like David Beckham. I believe that as a coach I can be a huge role model on the athletes by the way I coach and the way I interact with my group."

"My football manager has taught me that you must push your players so they work hard in training, this is a major part of my coaching philosophy as what you do on the training field, you take onto the park."

"I believe that my coaching philosophy has been moulded through my childhood with my parents, friends and also the laid back and friendly atmosphere I have lived with my whole life through being brought up in a small island community. With this constant socialisation with a range of age

groups knowing exactly who I am and talking to me on a day to day basis I have been able to build up social skills which mean I'm not intimidated by coaching a group of 5 year olds or a group of 30 year olds."

The last quotation is thought-provoking in that, rather than attributing their philosophy to one or two key individuals, the participant demonstrates an awareness of the contribution of his/her holistic environment throughout their developmental stages. The tendency for coaches to rely on informal, experiential learning has been long-established (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003) and appears to be replicated in the participants. In their study of expert coaches, Rynne and Mallett (2014) reported that the three primary sources of learning were unmediated; on the job experience, discussions with others, and experiences as athletes. The propensity for the coaches in the current paper to cite their own coaches, physical education teachers, and parents as influential figures, rather than coach peers may be representative of their stage of development as the majority were at the beginning of their coaching careers and perhaps did not have the wealth of workplace experience cited by Rynne and Mallett's coaches as being important.

Self-reflection

Perhaps most surprisingly for novice coaches, there was considerable attention given to the importance of self-reflection in their philosophies. It is accepted that this is likely to have been taught or learned by the students within the assigned reading but, given that

the documents were written fewer than ten weeks into the module, it is interesting to note that this reasonably high-level activity was so well represented.

> "I believe that to be a successful coach I continually need to re-evaluate and assess my coaching style. I will watch and learn from the good practices of other coaches and always be aware of new techniques which may assist me in my coaching sessions."

> "The first step in my coaching philosophy is to look at myself as a coach and to discover and understand myself. To understand myself I have to look at the habits of my personality and see how they can help to communicate to the athletes that I will be dealing with in my coaching."

It has been suggested that reflection is a relatively complex, higher order cognitive process and is less likely to be undertaken effectively by novices. Knowles et al. (2001) highlights the complexity of the process, purporting that one cannot assume reflective skills will be naturally acquired simply through participation in education or through experience. While it may be that the individuals had already achieved this stage of development, perhaps through engagement with National Governing Body coach education, it is also possible that: firstly, the coaches may have again been simply paying "lip service" to a concept which they considered the module assessors would expect them to address; and/or secondly, that they may feel they are reflective without necessarily engaging fully in the process. The literature has suggested that the process

of reflection is most effective when undertaken with a “knowledgeable other” (Gilbert and Trudel, 2005), perhaps explaining the significance of discussions with others in Rynne and Mallett’s study (2014) and so it seems less likely that in-depth reflection has occurred as often it was cited in the statements

Conclusion

This paper sought to advance the relatively under-researched field examining the intricacies of coach philosophies, and to address the dearth of research into tertiary education coaching degrees. While a number of the coaches who participated appeared to be able to articulate reasonably strong views on their approach, despite their novice status, there was also some evidence of the disparity between intent and action, as reported previously in the literature. The tendency for the sport environment to replicate competitive, high performance discourse was apparent in the statements of some coaches but more chose to emphasise an approach characterised by individual personal development and encouraging fun; an outcome perhaps related to the level at which they coached at that time (Côté *et al*., 2007). The novice coaches in this study echoed the findings of previous work suggesting that the definition of success is a complex issue and it is clear that the interplay between coaching objectives, plus the underlying values motivating these objectives, are crucial factors in the development and implementation of coaching philosophies. The nature of these elements of the coaches’ practice, particularly in terms of whether they are fixed or dependent on context would benefit from further, longitudinal research.

It is hoped that the findings of this paper will be utilised by coach educators in universities to help inform the content and structure of future programmes. Of high priority for educators is the provision of resources to assist students in developing and articulating an authentic philosophy; one in which there is minimal dissonance between intention and action. Given that there is clear evidence to suggest that coaches develop expertise predominantly through experience, it seems logical to format education systems which are equipped to utilise this knowledge. Potential recommendations for implementation therefore could involve the use of a formalised mentoring system, in order to provide each student with personal access to a "knowledgeable other" to prompt deeper reflection. This mentoring relationship could be extended to include regular coach observations (in a naturalistic setting, rather than within class sessions) and the use of video footage to provide more objective confirmation of intended behaviour. While these recommendations may be easily suggested, higher education resources are often stretched, with large class sizes preventing extensive staff engagement in this manner. An appropriate solution may therefore be the facilitation of a mentoring system to match final year and postgraduate students with more novice practitioners, hopefully to the mutual benefit of both parties.

By assisting student coaches to critique their proposed philosophy and better match it to their actions in the field, educators ought to be more successful in challenging previously established values, potentially guarding against the reproduction of harmful or ineffective practices, and allowing the development of more reflective, athlete-centred coaches.

References

Bennie, A., and O'Connor, D. (2010) Coaching Philosophies: Perceptions from Professional Cricket, Rugby League and Rugby Union Players and Coaches in Australia. International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching. Vol.5(2), pp.309-320.

Bloom, G. A., Durand-Bush, N., Schinke, R. J., and Salmela, J. H. (1998) The importance of mentoring in the development of coaches and athletes. International Journal of Sport Psychology. Vol.29 pp.267-281.

Camiré, M., Trudel, P., and Forneris, T. (2012) Coaching and transferring life skills: philosophies and strategies used by model high school coaches. Sport Psychologist. Vol.26(2), pp.243-260.

Cassidy, T. G., Jones, R. L., and Potrac, P. (2008) Understanding sports coaching: The social, cultural and pedagogical foundations of coaching practice. Routledge.

Collins, K., Barber, H., Moore, K., and Laws, A. (2011) The First Step: Assessing the Coaching Philosophies of Pre-Service Coaches. ICHPER-SD J ournal of Research. Vol.6(2), pp.21-29.

Collins, K., Gould, D., Lauer, L., and Chung, Y. (2009) Coaching Life Skills through Football: Philosophical Beliefs of Outstanding High School Football Coaches. International Journal of Coaching Science. Vol.3(1).

Côté, J., Young, B., North, J., and Duffy, P. (2007) Towards a definition of excellence in sport coaching. International journal of coaching science. Vol.1(1), pp.3-17.

Cross, N., and Lyle, J. (eds.) (1999) The Coaching Process: Principles and Practice for Sport. Butterworth-Heinemann Limited.

Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., and Jones, R. L. (2003) Coach education and continuing professional development: experience and learning to coach. Quest (00336297). Vol.55(3), pp.215-230.

Fernández-Balboa, J.-M., and Muros, B. (2006) The Hegemonic Triumvirate--Ideologies, Discourses, and Habitus in Sport and Physical Education: Implications and Suggestions. Quest (00336297). Vol.58(2), pp.197-221.

Gilbert, W. D., and Trudel, P. (2004) Analysis of coaching science research published from 1970–2001. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport. Vol.75(4), pp.388-399.

Gilbert, W. D., and Trudel, P. (2005) Learning to Coach through Experience: Conditions that Influence Reflection. Physical Educator. Vol.62(1), pp.32-43.

Gould, D., Collins, K., Lauer, L., and Chung, Y. (2007) Coaching life skills through football: A study of award winning high school coaches. Journal of applied sport psychology. Vol.19(1), pp.16-37.

Hughes, R., and Coakley, J. (1991) Positive deviance among athletes: the implications of overconformity to the sport ethic. Sociology of sport journal. Vol.8(4).

Jenkins, S. (2010) Coaching Philosophy. In: J. C. Lyle, Chris, (ed.) Sports coaching: Professionalisation and practice. Elsevier Health Sciences, pp. 55-64.

Knowles, Z., Gilbourne, D., Borrie, A., and Nevill, A. (2001) Developing the Reflective Sports Coach: A study exploring the processes of reflective practice within a higher education coaching programme. Reflective Practice. Vol.2(2), pp.185-207.

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991) Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge university press.

Light, R. L., and Evans, J. R. (2011) Dispositions of elite-level Australian rugby coaches towards game sense: characteristics of their coaching habitus. Sport, Education and Society. Vol.18(3), pp.407-423.

Lyle, J. (2002) Sports coaching concepts: A framework for coaches' behaviour. Routledge.

Martens, R. (2004) Successful Coaching. Human Kinetics.

McCallister, S. G., Blinde, E. M., and Weiss, W. M. (2000) Teaching values and implementing philosophies: Dilemmas of the youth sport coach. The Physical Educator. Vol.57(1).

Nash, C. S., Sproule, J., and Horton, P. (2008) Sport Coaches' Perceived Role Frames and Philosophies. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching. Vol.3(4), pp.538-554.

Patton, M. Q. (2002) Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. SAGE Publications.

Rokeach, M. (1973) The nature of human values. Free Press.

Rynne, S. B., and Mallett, C. J. (2014) Coaches' learning and sustainability in high performance sport. Reflective Practice. Vol.15(1), pp.12-26.

Sparkes, A. C., Partington, E., and Brown, D. H. K. (2007) Bodies as bearers of value: the transmission of jock culture via the 'Twelve Commandments'. Sport, Education and Society. Vol.12(3), pp.295-316.

Stewart, C. (1993) Coaching behaviors: "The way you were, or the way you wished you were". Physical Educator. Vol.50(1), pp.23-30.

Watson, N. (2007) Muscular Christianity in the modern age. "Winning for Christ" or "playing for glory"? . Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction. Routledge.

Watson, N., and White, J. (2007) "Winning at all costs" in modern sport. Reflections on pride and humility in the writings of C.S. Lewis. In: J. Parry, S. Robinson, N. Watson, and M. Nesti, (eds.) Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction. Routledge.

Wilcox, S., and Trudel, P. (1998) Constructing the coaching principles and beliefs of a youth ice hockey coach. Avante, 4 (3), 39-66.